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4th plenary meeting
Monday, 23 September 2013, 5.30 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Moreno (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 5.50 p.m.

High-level Meeting on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and Other Internationally Agreed Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities

Agenda item 27 (*continued*)

Social development

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with sub-paragraph (c) of paragraph 3 of resolution 66/124, of 19 December 2011, we will now hear presentations by the co-Chairs of round table discussions 1 and 2 of the High-level Meeting.

I give the floor to Mr. Arsenio Balisacan, Secretary of Socioeconomic Planning of the Philippines and co-Chair of round table 1.

Mr. Balisacan (Philippines): Today presents a remarkable opportunity to push for a post-2015 era that is inclusive of persons with disabilities. International and regional development cooperation partnerships can play a key role in promoting that objective. The post-2015 development agenda must serve to send a clear message to the world that we value everyone's contribution, including those of persons with disabilities. A human-based approach to disability needs to be adopted, one that can in turn contribute to national development and wealth creation.

Several Member States noted that the entry into the force of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol had provided a platform to advocate for change and a paradigm shift from a welfare-based approach to one based on promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. At the same time, a gap between policy and implementation remains. Member States emphasized the importance of the universal ratification of the Conventoin to ensure the universal enjoyment of the rights it enshrines by persons with disabilities. Therefore, the signature and ratification of the convention and its Optional Protocol should be promoted.

The international community is committed to changing the situation and to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The outcome document adopted today (resolution 68/3) recognizes the urgent need for action by all the relevant stakeholders to promote more ambitious disability-inclusive development strategies backed up by increased international cooperation and support.

The focus of round table 1 was the role of international and regional cooperation and partnerships in promoting the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities to achieve disability-inclusive development. In addition to the many examples of national and regional efforts, numerous Member States

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stressed the importance of including specific reference to disability issues in the post-2015 development agenda referring to the remaining challenges and the Millennium Development Goals.

In the same way, many Member States reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening international and regional partnerships and cooperation, with numerous States mentioning it as key to mitigating ongoing challenges for persons with disabilities. Several Member States called for strengthening South-South cooperation in particular. Governments also placed emphasis on the protection of children with disabilities, improving access to services such as education and health, opportunities for skills-training and employment, as well as access to appropriate housing, as important areas for action. Multiple approaches should be used in reaching out to the diverse population of persons with disabilities, as well as to their families.

Until now, the potential of development cooperation to advance the achievements of sustainable development by supporting the contribution of persons with disabilities has been largely unrealized. That must change.

International and regional cooperation and partnerships will be essential components to support the mainstreaming of disability in development towards 2015 and beyond. Today Member States indicated that they have made invaluable progress at the domestic level. They also highlighted a number of common challenges faced in terms of international and regional cooperation and partnerships. That includes a lack of capacity, including in human resources, which can impede the development and implementation of policies or programmes that support disability-inclusive development, as well as financial and technical constraints, which can inhibit action through both international and regional cooperation and partnerships.

There is both a lack of awareness of disability and an understanding of various issues, such as gender and disability perspectives. A lack of disability-specific data renders disability invisible in development goals, monitoring and evaluations. Finally, there is a lack of coordination among the various actors involved in a given development initiative.

We have heard many examples of the ways in which international and regional cooperation and partnership can serve as vehicles for change in national efforts to mainstream disability. These have included supporting the assessment of national capacity gaps and subsequent efforts towards capacity-building; providing economic and technical assistance in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of disability-sensitive national policies and programmes; supporting public awareness campaigns to increase knowledge and understanding in the larger society regarding disability and the situation of persons with disabilities; building knowledge and understanding of the situation of persons with disabilities to support evidence-based policymaking — this can include support for research and access to scientific and technical knowledge; supporting access to and the sharing of accessible and assistive technologies and through the transfer of technologies; and supporting accessibility through projects related to the environment, transportation and information and communications technology.

A number of participants highlighted the importance of taking a twin-track approach to programme development and implementation to ensure disability-inclusive development.

Regionalism remains an important engine for international partnerships. Regional initiatives, particularly in the context of regional decades, are central to mainstreaming disability in development cooperation and can help with mainstreaming on the ground. We heard examples from the Caribbean Community of its regional initiatives to address the issue of climate change. The European Union stressed that it would continue to ensure that the disability dimension is part of our development work. In Asia and the Pacific, the Asian strategy has helped reaffirm the commitment to persons with disabilities to make their rights real. Developments within the Southern Common Market highlighted the growing importance of South-South, triangular and decentralized cooperation based on mutual interests and shared responsibility of our parties.

Partnerships between private sector entities, the public sector and civil society entities can also play an important role in advancing disability-inclusive development. Equal participation in economic, social and political life can contribute to economic growth. There is a need to further strengthen international cooperation and support domestic efforts for the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, leading up to 2015 and beyond, for persons with disabilities. Increasing mobilization of public

and private resources and exchange of goods and good practices, including by utilizing multiple modalities of regional and subregional cooperation, North-South cooperation, South-South and triangular cooperation, is encouraged to achieve this objective. All stakeholders should be encouraged to take urgent action to promote a disability perspective in the post-2015 development agenda. We must ensure that we leave no one behind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Heidi Hautala, Minister of International Development of Finland, who co-chaired round table 2.

Ms. Hautala (Finland): Allow me to read out the summary of the co-chairs of round table 2.

In terms of conclusions and recommendations, welcoming the adoption of the outcome document (resolution 68/3) of the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development, which reaffirms the international community's commitment to advancing the rights of all persons with disabilities and work together for disability-inclusive development, round table 2 brought forward the following recommendations on how to ensure a disability-inclusive post-2015 agenda.

First, we must adopt an inclusive and equitable post-2015 development agenda. According to article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, all development cooperation should be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities. Adopting an inclusive and equitable post-2015 development agenda implies recognizing that the ultimate goal of development cooperation is to further human dignity, social and economic inclusion, equality and poverty eradication. The content of goals, targets and indicators of the post-2015 development agenda should correspond to principles and standards of civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international human rights instruments.

Secondly, we must ensure equality and non-discrimination. In order to be able to ensure disability-inclusive development, the international community should strive to guarantee that equality and non-discrimination are reflected throughout the future development agenda. Ensuring universality in goal-setting is important but cannot alone contribute to reducing existing inequalities. Special measures and specific targets should be designed to remove the barriers that persons with disabilities are facing and ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy the benefits of development on equal grounds with others.

Attention must be paid to multiple grounds for exclusion and discrimination. This implies collecting data and strengthening research towards discovering the underlying reasons for exclusion and discrimination. As persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group, data needs to be disaggregated by impairment, barriers and other grounds for exclusion, such as, for example, geographic location, age and gender. Discrimination against women and girls with disabilities should be taken into account when discussing the future development agenda.

Thirdly, we must advance accessibility. The removal of physical, social, economic, communicational, attitudinal, institutional and legal barriers needs to be taken into account when implementing the future goals of the post-2015 agenda in order to ensure equal access to inclusive education, employment, open and decent work, social protection and health-care services. Specific and appropriate measures to overcome such barriers could include, inter alia, engineering universal design and assistive technologies and promoting community-based rehabilitation. In this regard, all Member States should work together to strengthen international cooperation and partnerships, inter alia through technology transfer, finance and capacity-building.

Fourthly, on the importance of an effective and meaningful participation, persons with disabilities are key actors and stakeholders when elaborating, implementing and monitoring the post-2015 agenda, and they should be closely consulted with and actively involved, including through their representative organizations. This should also apply to global and national development agendas. Inclusive education should be a priority when considering the targets of the post-2015 agenda, as education is a crucial factor in improving opportunities for participation and a key vector for poverty reduction and decent work. Furthermore, all development efforts should strive to build the capacity of persons with disabilities and their organizations in order for them to be able to know and claim their rights.

Fifthly and lastly, we must increase follow-up and monitoring. To strengthen the follow-up and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda, States should ensure that mechanisms for follow-up and monitoring

of international and national plans and commitments are set up and inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I understand that this has been an extraordinary day. Today's High-level Meeting is a milestone in the history of the United Nations. Member States have shown leadership and commitment by adopting a new tool — an action-oriented final document (resolution 68/3) — to strengthen our work to realize disability-inclusive development at all levels. On behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, I want to warmly thank members for all their efforts and work for an extremely important cause, which I would characterize as practical solidarity with people with disabilities. That reconfirmation of every human being's equal value is, to me, what this is all about. We are all aware of the challenge. But today we recognize the enormous opportunity of the more than 1 billion people with disabilities being given the chance to make the most of their lives. Let me repeat and highlight some key features of the document.

But before doing so, let me say something informally about the sad fact that evidently many participants were not given an opportunity to make their statements. I am a former President of the General Assembly, and I can recall similar instances when I was President. I want to tell participants how important it is that all voices be heard. But with modern technology evolving so much more than when I was President, seven years ago, members should know that every speech they submit to the Secretariat will be posted on the website of the High-level Meeting. That is why we have so many readers — the many people on the outside who follow these proceedings. I would therefore encourage everyone to post their statements, in particular those who did not have a chance to speak. I regret deeply that that was the case. The Organization builds on universality and sovereign equality. I really feel the pain that some have, having written speeches with so much of their soul, blood and heart — and then not being able to deliver them. But please pass them on. I feel very strongly about that. I will follow up this issue myself.

Turning to some of the highlights, as members know very well, I find it important that Member States have reiterated their determination to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities. Member States have also underscored the need for all to take urgent action towards the adoption and implementation of more ambitious disability national development strategies, backed by increased international cooperation. There has to be an interplay between national and international action. Persons with disabilities will remain disproportionately vulnerable to poverty without a targeted focus on their rights and concerns. I have seen that myself in my many years in humanitarian and conflict-related situations. Without more coherent and targeted poverty reduction efforts, we may not be able to achieve, or sustain, MDG progress.

I fully agreed with Minister Balisacan and Minister Hautala when they stressed the importance of listening to all voices and all persons with disabilities as we work to formulate a global development agenda beyond 2015. I have a special responsibility, given to me by the Secretary-General, to follow this issue, which will be with us for the next two years or so. I can assure the Assembly that I will keep in mind the situation of people with disabilities. I hope that their voices will be heard, both in the meeting rooms at the United Nations but also back in their own countries and capitals.

A Prime Minister once taught me something about how to measure the quality of a society. He said, "Every society should, in the end, be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable people." That is the quality control of a good society: how do we treat the most vulnerable. It is a very useful rule in life. If one judges how disabilities are treated and then measures that quality, then I think we will have very important advice that we could use in setting the direction in a more determined way.

Member States have also resolved to undertake what I call a range of bold actions, namely, first, to achieve the full implementation of the normative framework on disability and development; secondly, to ensure that all development policies reflect the needs of all persons with disabilities; thirdly, to develop plans, legislation, policy and institutional structures and capacities to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities; fourthly, to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in strategic areas such as education, health care, social protection, employment and humanitarian responses; and fifthly, to improve disability data collection, analysis and monitoring.

Finnish President Paasikivi also taught me something. He said that the source of wisdom was knowing the facts. I think that data collection is very important. Lastly, Member States resolved to encourage the mobilization of public and private resources on a sustainable basis at all levels to mainstream disability in development. Those are six very important points of action.

In his reports on disability and development, the Secretary-General, together with all the relevant United Nations entities, will provide an update on progress in implementing the outcome document. Those reports will serve as an important tool to maintain the momentum for global-wide action on disabilities and development.

I call upon all Member States, civil society and other actors to implement the international framework on disability and development, and the outcome document of this High-level Meeting. That is a shared responsibility. The Secretary-General and I are fully committed to mobilizing the United Nations system behind these goals.

Participants should be proud of their accomplishments today. We would not be celebrating this achievement without the tireless efforts of everyone in the Hall, or without their work back in their own countries communities. Participants are helping to give life to core values and fundamental principles, that is, the dignity of every human being, equality of opportunity, and full participation. That is the core of participants' mission, but it is also the heart and soul of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us never forget those guiding principles of the Organization, what we stand for and what we have to show in practical deeds in life. Our job is to work to close the gap between the values and ideals of the Charter and the sometimes sad realities of life around the world. We have to narrow the divide between the world as it is today and the world as we want it to be. That is actually the mission of the Organization: to diminish the gap between the world as it is and the world as it must be, as we want it to be and as it is possible to make it.

Thanks to those here, perhaps that gap has narrowed today. But that depends upon what we do. In a way, this is just a step in one direction. Looking back on many years in diplomacy and having gone through many processes of negotiation, in the end what counts is what we do in practice and in action. The accountability for this outcome document rests on all of us. We have to translate the document into practical solidarity — the word I used in the beginning — and live up to the commitments that we are making and what the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all the documents that relate to the situation of persons with disabilities are all about.

Let us therefore commit together to build an inclusive development agenda that fully incorporates the rights and concerns of persons with disabilities for the good of all and for the good of a life of dignity for all. A life of dignity is a life in peace; a life of dignity is a life with development; a life of dignity is a life with respect for human rights and the rule of law, including for those who are in the most vulnerable positions. Let us prove that we are standing up for the equal value of every human being.

I thank delegations for their efforts. I am sorry for the fact that we could not continue the Meeting for two days, which we probably needed, but representatives know how this week is. I really want again to plead with representatives to give us their speeches and let us see this as part of an ongoing effort to which we are committed.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his statement.

The High-level Meeting on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and Other Internationally Agreed Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities is now concluded.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 27.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.